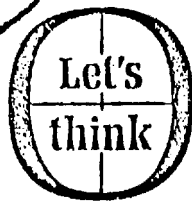


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To lie for one's country

By Erwin D. Canham

Obviously all diplomacy does not have to take place in public.

But should a diplomat, should a political leader, be expected to lie for his country? This is one of the great ethical questions in a free society. It stands in the cruel spotlight these days of the revelations, now admitted, of peace feelers from Hanoi to Washington in 1964. It lurked in the public statements made concerning the government's dealings with the aluminum manufacturers. It arose over the Santo Domingo affair.

The United States Government has recently been caught in several very clumsy situations where its veracity could be questioned. Concerning the peace feelers from Hanoi, the question is not whether the United States should have been willing to negotiate in 1964—when the military and political situation was so bad that any discussions could only have led to virtual rout—but whether it should have disclosed at the time that peace feelers from the North Vietnamese had been received.

A free government cannot really have it both ways. It cannot live both in the shadow and in the light. It can retain some privacy, withhold certain facts, but sooner or later it must admit its accountability to public opinion and let the people know what has been going on.

Contradictory version

Some day there will be a full, lurid, and undoubtedly highly contradictory exploration of the doings of the Central Intelligence Agency. Such a post mortem on the Bay of Pigs tragedy is brewing.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in his current *Approved For Release 2004/11/01 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200640017-6* articles and forthcoming book,

leaves the onus of the Bay of Pigs on the CIA. Allan Dulles, who headed the agency at the time, is burning with indignation at the Schlesinger account and has offered his own contradictory version to a national monthly magazine.

When the doings over the last 15 years of the CIA are ultimately put through the wringer and hung out on the line to dry—and this is inevitable, human nature being what it is—the United States may suffer severely. Professor Schlesinger's criticism of the agency's operations in Laos, Indonesia, and elsewhere in Asia are just as severe as his observations about the Cuban invasion attempt.

It is all horrible grist for the United States's critics and enemies around the world. And so are the State Department's or the White House's belated admissions that they have misstated or concealed important facts. Governments have to maintain their credibility and integrity. They need not tell all, but they also need not lie about it.

Ambassador deceived

One of the most electric moments of recent years was when President Kennedy sat in his rocking chair in the White House and heard Andrei Gromyko lie about the missiles in Cuba. A sadder moment, earlier, was when Adlai Stevenson told the United Nations that the air raids over Cuba, just before the Bay of Pigs, were by Cuban defectors. Ambassador Stevenson had been deceived by his own government.

I do not naïvely assume that other free governments have not been guilty of attempted deceit. They have, *Approved For Release 2004/11/01 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200640017-6* ventions of diplomacy and

even of public relations which permit ambiguity and reticence. Laconic understatement can be one useful technique. The old phrase "no comment," while an admission that something is afoot, remains useful. The tendency nowadays to make up "cover stories" seems usually to do more harm than good. How tragically bad the "cover" story was concerning the U-2 flights in 1960.

The old-fashioned conscience is hard to find these days. It is far from only the diplomats and politicians who are to blame. Businessmen, advertisers, lawyers—almost by definition in the "adversary" proceedings in court—seem to ignore earlier concepts of candor and honesty.

Priceless asset

Sooner or later, we will have an awakening. Americans might well remember some of the rugged individualists of their earlier history, whose consciences drove them to speak the truth however unpleasant it might sometimes be to their own cause.

Self-deceit and self-righteousness remain terrible enemies of truth. They are easy diseases to contract. Sometimes they are only a façade, an affectation which makes a cynical awareness of truth.

The thoroughly experienced politician or diplomat is the man who knows that his most priceless asset is to be trusted. American diplomacy should recapture this kind of integrity. Indeed, many American diplomats still practice it. They are the successful and valuable ones. Presidents and secretaries of state and of defense need it. They are the ones who have suffered most. *Approved For Release 2004/11/01 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200640017-6* May they awaken.

Keep Canham, run.
Bay of Pigs
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